

Top World Sprinters for JN Jamaica Invitational Meet

Donald Quarrie, Director of the JN Jamaica International Invitational Track Meet, has disclosed that seven elite sprinters have already confirmed for the 2012 event, which will take place at the National Stadium on Saturday, May 5.

The confirmed athletes are double world record holder Usain Bolt; 100m world champion Yohan Blake; former world record holder Asafa Powell; world champions Carmelita Jeter and Kirani James, as well as Olympic champion Shelly-Ann Fraser Pryce and Melaine Walker.

“Those seven could show up at any Meet and be the cream of the crop,” he stated. “Fortunately for us, we still have a lot more who are interested in coming.”

Mr. Quarrie was addressing the Jamaica Athletic Administrative Association (JAAA) press conference at the Wyndham Kingston Hotel last Friday, March 16. The first major outdoor meet in the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) calendar of events, the JN Jamaica Invitational Meet will be the ninth such event being staged by the JAAA.

Leon Mitchell, Jamaica National Building Society (JNBS) Assistant General Manager, said that as title sponsor of the event, his organisation would be working with the JAAA to ensure that the Meet is of the highest standard.

The building society made a three-year sponsorship commitment with the JAAA in 2010, Mr. Mitchell stated. Since then, JN had helped to develop a new approach to the staging of the Invitational Meet, which subsequently saw the Meet being upgraded to IAAF Challenge Meet, which is just below the Diamond League Standard.

“As Jamaicans celebrate the 50th anniversary of their independence and as our Jamaican athlete prepare for the 2012 Olympics, the JN Jamaica Invitational Meet becomes even more meaningful,” he said. “This is our opportunity to showcase our best, against the rest of the world.”

There will be 19 events at the meet this year, which will be streamed live to more than 100,000 households across 25 countries. Last year, more than 25,000 spectators attended the Meet in Kingston, one of the highest levels of fans in its history.

Dr. Warren Blake, President of the JAAA, promised that the Association will continue to maintain the traditions of the late Howard Airs, former JAAA President, by steadily improving the administration of the Meet. Mr. Airs died in November last year.

“With the continued support of the elite athletes and our sponsors, such as Jamaica National, it is our hope that we will be rewarded with the Grand Prix (Diamond League) status,” Dr. Blake said, “because that is our ultimate objective.”